DON'T QUIT:

LESSONS LEARNED FROM A CHRISTIAN SEX ADDICT

by

I. M. RESCUED

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to our Heavenly Father
and His son Jesus, my Rescuer and Savior.
Also, dedicated to my blessed family.
Because of all of them, the journey is possible.

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God Loves You and Me

CHAPTER 1

WHY READ THIS BOOK?

I can't quit. I have anguished over those three words for many years, because I am a Christian sex addict. By age 27, I knew I had desperately spiraled out of control. My twisted thinking and deviant behaviors had started at age eight. But by age 50, I had learned something about myself that would serve me well. For me, not quitting has been a horrible thing and a necessary endeavor. Could that be true for you too?

I struggled for decades to quit my self-destructive thinking and disastrous behaviors. In order to accomplish that, I have learned I must rely on God and that I can't quit the healthy practices that my Heavenly Father has provided me. Whether you think you might be a sex addict, or you know for sure you are, I pray this book speaks to what you need to hear and to what our Heavenly Father wants you to discover, because you are not alone.

In 2010, I started writing down some of the information contained in this book. It was very therapeutic for me at the time, and it definitely helped my recovery. But within months I quit writing. I had been so motivated when I first started recording my experiences, thoughts, and emotions. I had felt a purpose, possibly a story to share someday, something that might help others avoid my terrible mistakes. I had learned from attending Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA) meetings that there are other people out there much like me. People who feel holes in their lives, holes in their very being. But nonetheless, I stopped writing. I asked myself off and on for years, why not finish what you started? I would tell myself, don't quit on that faint desire to finish. Don't give into fear, shame, and guilt. After much prompting from God over the past 14 years, I finally listened. Praise God!

So why read this book? There are several reasons, one being that you realize you need to quit some unhealthy and risky behaviors, and you don't know how. You are so tired of feeling despair and hopelessness. Another reason is there are some activities you should not quit, practices that our Heavenly Father will use to help you stop destructive behaviors and faulty thinking. The information presented here just might reveal beneficial practices that will aid you. Your family is yet another critical reason to read this book, because what you do greatly impacts their lives.

By reading this book, you have taken a huge step, a step that I wish I had taken 38 years ago, when I first realized I was a sex addict, and a Christian sex addict at that. But before you go any further, **STOP READING and do the following:**

- look around and be sure that no one who knows you can see that you are reading this book;
- figure out how long you can read this book right now without being detected by someone you know;
- figure out where you are going to hide this book (physical book or on-line version) quickly if someone you know walks up on you unexpectedly;
- figure out where you are going to hide this book after reading it each time, so you can be guaranteed that no one you know will find this book; and
- make sure that if this book is found that nobody can attribute it to being your book.

Why did I tell you to do those things before continuing reading? Because that is what sex addicts do, we do whatever it takes to hide our other life. Now your other life may be different from what my other life was, but I bet you and I have some things in common, so I hope you keep on reading. It could just save your relationship with a loved one, or maybe even your life or the life of someone dear

to you. By the way, there is that other unrelenting reason to read this book, your soul. Living with our Heavenly Father for all eternity is going to be so sweet, and peaceful. God's peace, which surpasses all understanding, is even available to us now (Philippians 4:7). Praise God!

Before I go any further though, please indulge me for just a moment, as I say a few words to the person reading this book that is not a sex addict. If you are a family member or friend of a sex addict, this book could also be useful to you. Sex addicts (especially Christian ones) often lead a double-life until they are caught or until they seek recovery on their own. So your understanding of your sex addict spouse or sex addict parent or sex addict friend is extremely important, important both for you and for the sex addict's recovery. Recovery, that is a big deal for a sex addict, and recovery has to start somewhere and sometime, so why not right now with your help? As I talk with the sex addict throughout the remainder of this book, please try to see things through their eyes, but also understand that will likely be difficult for you. The eyes and mind of a sex addict are quite distorted, twisted, and tainted. Unfortunately you will not like what you see much of the time. But if you feel called to help, please try, and may our Heavenly Father bless you for it.

Now where was I? Oh yeah, your soul. My discussion throughout this book assumes that you are a Christian, but if you are not, I still think you can benefit much from the information presented here. Many of the useful practices identified in this book do not depend on you believing in God, so I hope you keep on reading.

If you are a Christian sex addict, you are struggling with some very dark and disturbing issues. You have told yourself time after time that you shouldn't think or do certain things, yet you repeat them. You ask our Heavenly Father to forgive you each time, to take the evil and wicked desires out of you, yet you grow weary of having that talk with God over and over again. You may even wonder right now that if you died, where would you end up? Of course you want to believe you will eventually be in Heaven with our loving Heavenly Father, but you have had doubts. Is God's grace sufficient for me? Will Christ's blood really wash my ugly, secret sins away? I hope and pray that by the time you have finished reading this book, that our Heavenly Father will have blessed you with His peace, and with a Godly understanding about yourself and your standing in His eyes.

A moment ago, I told your family member or friend that you will lead a double-life until you are caught or until you seek recovery on your own. Regretfully, I must admit I had to get caught. Please avoid my mistake and consider starting your recovery now. You already know how exhausting a double-life can be, to be a Christian and do all the things that Christians try to do, and yet also participate in vile sinful behaviors. Wow, the energy you are putting into hiding your behavior, into scheming, into strategizing, into fantasy, into covering your tracks, into planning, into figuring out back-up plans to your planning, into acting a certain way around others despite what you just did a day ago or even an hour ago. It is all making me tired just thinking about it.

Unless you want to go to your grave with your inner demons alive and well, then you have to learn that recovery has to start sometime. Let me tell you my friend, YOU ARE IN NEED OF RECOVERY! Until you get that through your head, and take ownership of that fact my dear brother or sister in Christ, you will continue in your destructive cycles time and time again. But you probably already realize that if you are reading this book. Please know that this book has been finished for you, to aid your recovery. If just one person is helped by the information presented here, then maybe I have fulfilled what God wanted me to do.

May our Heavenly Father bless your reading of this book. May God press upon your heart and mind what you need to hear. And anything in this book that is not true and useful for you should be discarded in accordance with God's Word and God's Will. In Jesus name I pray this, Amen.

As you continue reading, please know that I realize my story is not your story. But some of the lessons I have learned might be useful to you. I do feel compelled to emphasize that the information presented here is from what I have learned throughout my journey. No, I am not a trained psychiatrist. No, I don't have a PhD in Psychology. No, I am not a Licensed Professional Counselor. What I am is a recovering Christian sex addict who has been living and analyzing my obsessive and compulsive thinking and behaviors for over 38 years. And I believe God wants me to share with you what I have learned. I am so very thankful to the Holy Spirit for guiding me, for getting the words on each page.

To close out this first chapter, I know you know my real name is not I. M. Rescued. When I first started writing back in 2010, no family members or friends knew of my sexual addiction, other than my wife. Of course there was also my weekly mental health therapist and my fellow SAA members, but they were safe secret keepers. A year later, I did disclose my sex addiction to my close friends and family (excluding my youngest son who was too young). While I have thought at times of using my real name in this book, I always come back to I. M. Rescued. The thought of putting my real name out there feels pretty scary; and besides, how could I protect my old secret life from newer acquaintances if I revealed my real name. I guess there will always be a part of me that just can't come totally clean with everyone, but that is okay, because our Heavenly Father is not finished with me yet. And God is not finished with you either.

CHAPTER 2

DISCOVERING MY ADDICTION

I am slow, stiff, and 65 now. But when I was a kid, I was always playing basketball. I could not get enough of it. While I did play football and track in middle school too, basketball was my main sport. When I got to high school, my coaches would work us in basketball practice so hard I thought at times I might actually die. But I never quit. Some have said that I was a darn good ball player. *Thank you Heavenly Father for those mad basketball skills!!!* And thank you God for not allowing me to quit on my passion for basketball, which I now realize was a consuming activity that often distracted me from indulging my ever-expanding sexual urges.

What are your healthy passions? Please don't ever quit your wholesome pursuits, they may be serving as protections, or at least some bit of helpful interference. Unfortunately, despite my basketball zealousness, I always found time to date girls and see just how far I could get with each one. Satisfying my urges was invariably the goal, not developing an actual relationship with the person. Oh I told myself I wanted a relationship, but I was just lying to myself, that is what sex addicts do. And if a girl was not available, my motivated mind seemed to always find ways to get my hands on porn, a temporary backup.

Unfortunately, as I progressed into early adulthood, those urges I intensely felt in my early years grew even more. I have since learned those urges (that had been satisfied by playing basketball or pursuing sex) were and are actually "triggers" for compulsive sexual thinking and behavior. It is usually clear to me now when I get triggered, and what I choose to do after that is extremely important. Did you notice I said "…is usually clear to me now…" in that previous sentence? To this day, I am still surprised that I sometimes miss identifying a devious trigger. Unfortunately, if you don't acknowledge to yourself when you are triggered, then rather protecting yourself, you will then engage in what is often termed (in SAA meetings) "a slip." Slips can be minor or very major.

I sadly have to admit that I still do slip from time to time. Fortunately, my slips now only include masturbating to mental fantasy or porn, and my sobriety periods are getting longer and longer as I get

older (by the way, that is an example of sex addict rationalization!). Please don't get me wrong, I know that watching any porn or indulging in any mental sex fantasy is very destructive and unhealthy. But those behaviors are not even close to the more extreme actions I have done in the past. And like I said before, thanks be to our Heavenly Father because He is not finished with me yet. It took me a long time to learn that if I wanted to ever complete this book to help others, I could not keep waiting until I was perfectly (always) sober from any sexual acting out. In SAA meetings, we often hear "progress, not perfection."

In 2010 I started my recovery. When talking to my therapist and in my weekly SAA meetings, it become very natural for me to speak about my sex addiction as "my Addict." As if my Addict was a real person other than me. In a way it was strange, but it also made a lot of sense to me at the time. I believed my Addict was definitely within me, and I often thought that I acted just the way he wanted me to. But I also knew my Addict was not who I wanted to be at all. I remember sharing in various SAA meetings that my Addict was a voice in my head that talks to me, he tries to convince me to do things that I know I should not do. I don't talk in terms of "my Addict" anymore. By making that statement though, I don't mean to sound judgmental in any way, because many of my fellow SAA members still do use that terminology. For me, I think that perspective served a useful purpose for a while because I could handle fighting my Addict, being angry with my Addict, feeling shame towards my Addict. At least my true self was maybe salvageable, could possibly be an okay human someday, and was not a broken person that needed fixing. But I know now that I am a broken person, and I also know the great Rescuer and Healer. Praise God!

I have often wondered if the Apostle Paul was a sex addict. He spoke of having a thorn in the flesh in Second Corinthians 12:7:

7To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

The Apostle Paul's thorn in the flesh certainly had him talking like a sex addict thinks. Sex addicts let their addiction do its thing, influence us to make really bad decisions, then we are sad and sorry that we gave into our addiction. Addicts tell ourselves and God that we won't do that again, then some time goes by (an hour, a day, a week, a year), and we do it again, and we ask ourselves why? We beat ourselves up, try again, ask God for help, and the cycle starts all over again. Sometimes we don't even ask God for help though, because we think we can control it if we will just try harder. The Apostle Paul put it much better than I can, in Romans 7:

14We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. 15I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. 18I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. 20Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. 21So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. 24What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!

While I can't be sure if the Apostle Paul's "thorn" problem was a sex addiction, I think it is obvious that whatever Paul's struggle or hindrance was, it clearly caused him great torment and anguish. I used

to hate my addiction for the agony it causes me, and similar to Paul, I have asked God many times to take my burden away. But my sex addiction has yet to go away. There was a time that I use to believe the only way to completely be rid of my addiction was for me to die. Dying seemed like a win-win solution for everyone. A well planned car wreck or self-induced heart-attack would put me out of my misery, and I also could not do any additional harm to my family. But at some point I began to realize that our Heavenly Father has a purpose for me, addiction and all. But I also know that Satan will never give up on trying to destroy me through whatever means possible.

Satan. Now that is one not to take lightly. I am not sure exactly how Satan is involved with my addiction, whether he created my addiction or he just uses it with great pleasure, but either way I am certain he wants me to quit seeking God's power. Even the Apostle Paul in Second Corinthians 12:7 said his "*thorn in the flesh*" was a "*messenger of Satan.*" Satan is probably already whispering to you to blow off this book, conjuring up all kinds of excuses and telling you lots of reasons why you need to stop reading. In fact, you may need to pause right now and pray to our Heavenly Father for the strength to fight and to do the right thing.

Even if you are not feeling Satan's influence at this moment, it seems to me that talking with God right now would be a good thing. Please pause and take a moment, ask our Heavenly Father to guide you as you read this book, to help you open your mind to His leading, to His Will, to where He wants to take you. God has a wonderful plan for each one of His children, better than anything we can imagine. God is in control of our lives, not Satan or any addiction, if we will just submit to Him, our awesome and grace-filled Heavenly Father.

(pause and pray)

If you just prayed, may God bless your prayer and give you everything you need.

I didn't always know that I had a sex addiction. I first discovered my addiction existed in 1986. I was working on my master's degree at the time, and ironically my degree was in marriage and family therapy. Yep, that is what I said, marriage and family therapy. Crazy, huh? As part of that study, I completed a one-week, intensive training workshop with the sex addiction therapy pioneer and master himself, Dr. Patrick Carnes. Dr. Carnes is a nationally known speaker on sex addiction and recovery. He is also the author of several books on the subject.

At the time I trained under Dr. Carnes, he was the designer and director of the first ever in-patient sexual dependency unit, and it was located in the Golden Valley Health Center in Golden Valley, Minnesota. Since that time, he has been instrumental in the development of treatment facilities across the country. I remember so clearly being mesmerized by every word that came out of Dr. Carnes' mouth. What he said as he trained all of us seemed to be so right on, hitting bull's-eye after bull's-eye. Unfortunately it made a lot of sense to me. *Thank you Heavenly Father for Dr. Carnes.*

During that week of intensive training, I came to learn that all those compulsive thoughts, tendencies, urges, behaviors, and obsessions I experienced since age eight had a name: "sex addiction." I also realized something else during that training, that not only did I have everything going for me (so I thought) at that invincible age of 27, I now knew I was a *Christian* sex addict. How could this be? I was a happily married man to a devoted Christian woman. My wife and I eagerly attended church regularly, were active in serving and helping out wherever we could, and had multitudes of Christian friends that deeply loved the Lord. I remember quite distinctly loving God very much at that time. How could I be a sex addict? Not facing that fact head-on at that moment in my life was the worst decision I have ever made. Now don't get me wrong, I did start lifting up prayers to God to relieve me of my addiction. I can't even count how many times I prayed that prayer in 1986. In 1987, I did

end an affair I had started in 1986. Unfortunately, that had not been my first affair. From 1988 to 1994, the severity and frequency of my sexual acting out lessened with each year that passed. By 1995, my life seemed to have turned around, but unfortunately there was one significant downfall in my thinking. I let myself believe I could work the problem out by myself, with God only helping occasionally when I sporadically called on Him for assistance.

CHAPTER 3

GOD, I WILL FAIL TODAY WITHOUT YOUR POWER

I clearly remember a special sunny day in April 2010, when I was driving back to work after a noontime SAA meeting. The SAA group leader that day laid out a discussion topic just like he was supposed to. Then one-by-one, we went around the room and gave our thoughts about that day's topic. Also, we each could do our "check-in" about our past week's recovery successes or failures if we wanted to, which almost every person did because sex addicts typically feel better after being honest with each other. It is an amazing process, and it really works. I will always remember what one of the old-timers told us during one of my first SAA meetings ever, and that is, the reason the SAA program works (sex addicts helping sex addicts) is because we all are not crazy at the same time.

The SAA group leader that day had selected SAA's first step as the topic for discussion, which for me can be summed up in one word – powerlessness. SAA has taken the 12 Steps from Alcoholics Anonymous and modified them to fit sexual addiction recovery. The SAA first step reads:

We admitted we are powerless over addictive sexual behavior – that our lives had become unmanageable.

I didn't have much to say to the group that day about SAA's first step, except to say that I had been asking God for help off and on since the 1980s. I also admitted I did need God in order to stop my addictive sexual thinking and behavior. After my brief comments on the selected topic, my "check-in" was typical for me at that time. I told the guys I was still struggling with the desire to view porn, still plagued with the daily fantasizing of sex with various women, still masturbating every chance I could get while playing graphic videos in my head of what I had done or would like to do to specific women. Despite all that, I declared to those in attendance that I was committed more than ever to not having another affair or being with another prostitute ever again. *Thank you Heavenly Father for empowering me to keep that specific commitment to date.* Those egregious transgressions in my past had to stop being repeated. I knew going back to that way of life would certainly destroy me and my family.

After the noontime SAA meeting in 2010, I was driving back to my workplace feeling hungry because I typically had to miss eating lunch on those days. My unsettled feeling though was not just hunger, something else was also eating at me. If I really believed all those many years that God could help me, and after praying to God off and on those years, then why wasn't I healed? Why wasn't I fixed after five years of periodic prayer, after 10 years, after 20? Why was I still a slave to some compulsive sexual thoughts and behaviors?

Then it hit me. If I truly believed that I was powerless over my addiction, how could I start any day without an admission to my Heavenly Father that I could not make it that day without His help, without His power. I have definitely felt out-of-control on many days since I first realized I was a sex addict, but I have also thought I was in-control on some days as well. What a lie Satan and my addiction had sold me on. I now know that any day that I don't access God's power is a day that I am out-of-control, just waiting for a disaster to happen. Such a disastrous day did happen back in 2007.

That unplanned, unexpected day in November 2007 shook me to my very core, and it ended up changing my life forever, and to varying degrees the lives of my family. Sure I did a lot of very stupid, selfish, and terrible things prior to 2007, but I had no idea that one day's events were about to trigger a horrible chain of events over the next two years. That day I was feeling very happy, quite in-control, and for some unknown reason I felt I deserved a small reward. I told myself that because I had gone a long time (1995-2007) with no sexual acting out, no accessing web porn or buying porn videos/magazines, no more strip clubs, no more massage parlors, no more prostitutes, and no more affairs, that I had earned some "good time" for "good behavior." I decided to cash in that earned good time on a little sexual fun.

Looking back now, I am astounded at how distorted and delusional my thinking was at that moment. I had so minimized my "habitual masturbation to mental sexual fantasy" that I didn't even classify that behavior to myself as being dangerous or out-of-control. Please be assured, mental fantasizing is very dangerous, it keeps us locked in our addiction. I actually had myself believing that I had been doing very well in my battle against sex addiction. So of course I felt I deserved a one-time reward.

My addiction gave me all kinds of ideas for a reward, but the one I settled on was going to a "modeling" studio to watch a naked girl touch herself while I masturbated. It would be so easy and would not take too much time or be that big of a cost. I had three studios to pick from because I passed by them every day to and from work. They were alongside the freeway, with their bright blinking lights always inviting men in to enjoy a quick self-indulgence. I had been in two of the three modeling studios before, but it had been over 12 years back.

The modeling studio routine was unforgettable for me. I would go into a dark parlor, pick a girl from among two or more choices, we would go into a back room, and I would pay her the required fee. I would then get undressed quickly and she would strip slowly. I would watch her touch herself in all kinds of creative ways while I masturbated. Fortunately, I would not be allowed to touch the "model." I knew that because I had tried to touch the girls in other local studios before, with little success. I assumed the girls and their "management" always wanted to avoid any possibility of legal entanglements or potential prostitution charges, and that was fine with me. I also had been haunted 20 years before by a dreadful experience in a Boston modeling studio while on out-of-town business. I certainly had learned my lesson from that one, or at least I thought I had. I will tell you more about that Boston experience in a moment.

I decided my November 2007 one-time reward would be to go to the modeling studio that was new to me, the one I had never been in before. It would be exciting to blaze new territory. Unfortunately, sex addicts often love the thrill and risk almost as much as the sex. When I got there, the outside blinking lights were on, but no one answered the door. What a letdown, I was so keyed up with anticipation that I was determined not to be disappointed. It was an easy and quick decision to just go up the freeway to one of the other two studios that I had patronized 12 years before. I have played that November 2007 day over in my mind many times since then, painfully wishing I had just given up and gone home. But unfortunately I didn't.

As I arrived at the alternative modeling studio, I could see no cars were there. I was happy that I did not have to contend with seeing any other "customers" because getting caught, being found out, is a sex addict's worst fear. The person that answered the door was the only "model" available at the time, but I wasn't disappointed because she was cute, and she had a neat German accent. She told me the price, I paid her the money, we went into the back room, we both got undressed, and she began modeling.

Then an unexpected thing happened. The German girl asked me if I wanted more than modeling. She said for just a little more money she would perform oral sex on me. I did not take long to think about it at all, and quickly said yes. She left the room in order to retrieve a condom so that her services on me would be done "safely." So I sat on the bed waiting. I ended up waiting what seemed like a very long time. And unfortunately that delay gave me time to think. I decided that when she got back I would ask her if I could do oral sex on her as well.

As mentioned before, I have played that November 2007 day's events over in my mind many times. And at this point in the story I have often wished that I had just left the room while she was gone getting the condom. In another wishful fantasy, I even altered the story mentally to the extent that I got dressed, waited for the German girl to return, and then talked with her about what a big mistake I had made. I would tell her that I realized how offensive I was being to God, and that I loved God so much that I came to my senses. That would have been a nice testimonial to a prostitute, something that could have been used by God to possibly reach this wayward person. But sadly I did not do any of that.

When the German girl did actually return, she quickly placed the condom on me, but before she could begin servicing me I presented my counter-proposal. She seemed genuinely surprised at my request, and agreed immediately. She laid down and I began. The time went by fast and the room alarm sounded indicating my allotted "modeling" time was over. The German girl never had time to even start servicing me. But I was more than satisfied and felt that I had gotten my money's worth. Then it happened.

As the German girl was leaving (she was literally walking away and had gotten to the door), she looked back at me with a big smile of gratitude, and all of a sudden she rushed back onto the bed. She asked me one thing – "Is your condom still on?" I said, "I think so." Within less than a minute our sexual intercourse was done. She quickly grabbed the used-up condom, did not ask for any more money, and rushed out of the room as if to not leave any evidence of her snap decision. I was left to get dressed and leave.

As I sat in my car in the parking lot I was in shock. I could not believe I had gone that far. I had told myself a hundred times since my last affair, that I would never have sex again with another women other than my wife. I had just done something that even I was surprised at. How could I be so out-of-control? For the past 12 years I had finally been in-control, I had done well managing my addiction. How could I have let that happen?

Then even more alarm set in. What if I just caught something from that German girl? Was that condom on good? I don't remember. Did the condom have a tear in it? I should have looked at it closely before she took it. Hey, wait a minute, I had oral sex with her as well. I could have caught something from that oral sex too!!! I am so stupid!!!!!!!!!!! How could I have let things get that out-of-control!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! My one-time reward was only supposed to be watching, masturbating, and NO TOUCHING!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I have to access daily (sometimes multiple times a day) what only my Heavenly Father can give me, and that is His power. Praise God!

CHAPTER 4

ADDICTION IS PROGRESSIVE AND YOU ARE OUT-OF-CONTROL

If left untreated, your addiction will get worse. I truly believe that. That inevitability has been conveyed to me through many stories from sex addicts. My own personal experiences confirm that principle as well. From age eight though the end of high school, my experimental sexual behaviors and acting out grew more and more. I was always trying to push the boundaries of what I had previously set for myself, not realizing my insatiable compulsive sexual desires would always want to escalate.

After that November 2007 day, I thought my situation couldn't get any worse. My confidence was severely shaken, how could I have let that happen? Why did I let things get so out-of-control with that German girl? And even more mind-boggling was that I let THAT happen again! I had been certain I had learned a huge lesson back in 1987 and THAT would never, ever be done again. How could I have repeated anything close to THAT dreadful experience at the Boston modeling studio in 1987?

Admittedly, THAT terrible 1987 experience (while on out-of-town business) was a little different though. THAT time was the first time I had ever gone to a modeling studio, and the lady there immediately offered me oral sex which then led quickly to intercourse. Looking back, it was obviously her standard, successful approach to gaining more money. I remember feeling so scared. She was evidently a seasoned prostitute; she even insulted me as to how badly I performed. But from that horrendous experience, I thought I had learned an unforgettable lesson – the agonizing fear of possibly contracting a sexually-transmitted disease. I knew I had a condom on at the time, but I soon convinced myself that I likely had contracted something. Because I lived in so much terror of that presumption for months, I knew THAT would never, ever happen again … or so I thought.

As you now know, it basically did happen again, 20 years later. I remember sitting in my car in that parking lot in 2007, feeling extremely angry with myself for not remembering the Boston lesson, for not being on my guard, for being out-of-control. Let me tell you dear Christian brother/sister, if you are a sex addict and are not in some sort of recovery program with God as your daily power source, then you are OUT-OF-CONTROL!!! Some days you may feel very much in-control, but please know this one thing, you aren't. When you fantasize about women (or men), seek out porn, cruise for sex and intimacy, contact a prostitute, or indulge in an affair, you think it is you that is making a choice and that you are in-control. But you actually are a slave, a slave to your addiction and a slave to sin and Satan. Please consider Romans 6:

[16]Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? [17]But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. [18]You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. [19]I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. [20]When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. [21]What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! [22]But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. [23]For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If you are not in recovery with God as your daily/hourly power source, which results in letting God be in-control, then you are not going to make it. Please pray for God's power to be your power source.

So back to the German girl experience in 2007. I initially thought the situation couldn't get any worse, but then the more I thought about it, I realized that yes it could get worse, much worse. I soon became reacquainted with the terror I felt after my 1987 Boston experience. I was scared to death that I may have contracted a sexually-transmitted disease from that German girl. I told myself I had to get tested immediately, and also I had to avoid having sex with my wife until I could obtain the test results. I had really messed things up, but giving my wife a disease would be even more evil, and I was determined not to let that happen.

I remember thinking I was doing a good thing. Avoid my wife at all costs, have our relationship be strained for a little while so that she would not want to approach me for sex, until I had time to get the test results back. Unfortunately, the doctor told me I would have to wait six months before determining whether or not I had contracted any of the possibilities. So I set out on a specific path that was meant to only last six months. I told myself it could work. I had no idea that my ill-conceived, foolhardy plan would turn out the way it did.

Looking back now it is obvious how delusional my plan was to think I could avoid my wife for six months, and then just step back into the marriage like nothing had ever happened. But once I got the expected "all clean" test results, I was convinced I could make it all right. Let me ask you something, are you delusional or fooling yourself about anything right now? Please give that question an abundance of thought and prayer, because you might be surprised with what God reveals to you.

I have known for a long time that my addiction, working in conjunction with Satan, loves to mess with my mind. I have grown to expect that and so I typically assess my actions through that filter, but for some reason I was fooled again on that November 2007 day. Makes me wonder how many other times I have allowed myself to be duped or tricked. As you may already know, we are in a war as we speak! Each day battle lines are being drawn by Satan, and at least for me I realize my addiction is Satan's favorite field general. I also understand that Satan uses other field generals in my life. Satan employs pride, selfishness, anxiety, and other weaknesses of mine against me. Satan also uses our addiction to keep us busy and mask/hide our other sinful vices. For me, I imagine until the day I die that my biggest threat will always be sex addiction.

My six month "avoid my wife" plan started off immediately in failure. In December 2007, my wife and I attended a friend's wedding out-of-town, and so we went up the night before which required us to stay at a nearby motel. That night my wife initiated sex. My wife's sexual aggressiveness was not typical and so I was pleasantly surprised at first. But then I reminded myself that I was supposed to be avoiding sex with my wife until I could find out if I was a safe sexual partner or not. I immediately felt being caught in a quandary. I knew that I couldn't stop what we were doing or else she would discover my predicament. But I desperately did not want to give her any type of disease. So I decided to just make our sexual experience a quickie and hope for the best, which that was not at all what she expected. Years later, my wife would tell me that she remembered that night all too well. She had interpreted my performance (or lack of) as reflecting a feeling on my part that I was violating some sort of loyalty to another woman.

That very next morning in 2007, I solidified my wife's gut suspicions that something was very wrong. My wife woke up wanting to sexually play some more before getting ready for the wedding, but I made some lame excuse about there not being enough time. That was the first time in 27 years of marriage that I said "no" to sex.

I can't even imagine now why I thought I was going to get away with saying no to sex. My wife had called me a "sex maniac" many times throughout our early years of marriage, due to the frequency in which I pursued sex with her. What was I thinking? Looking back, I obviously wasn't thinking that morning in 2007. I had just put blinders on and went ahead with my plan, an obviously flawed and delusional plan. But I remember continually reminding myself that if I could just make it through the planned "strained" avoidance period and get a clean bill of health, then after that I would be able to fix everything and get things back to normal.

Back to normal, what does that even mean to a sex addict? In one of my past SAA meetings the chosen topic for discussion was: "What is healthy sexual behavior?" Interestingly, out of the 11 guys in the SAA meeting that day, only one said that he was in an active, healthy sexual relationship, and even for him that was temporarily "on hold" due to his wife being very pregnant. But I loved how the guy (let's call him Todd) talked about his wife. It was Todd's second marriage, the first marriage went up in flames due to his unhealthy compulsive sexual behavior. Todd entered into his second marriage being very up-front about his sexual addiction and need for recovery. Todd and his wife enjoyed a strong alliance which served them well in many aspects, and which led them into a healthy sexual relationship. All the other guys in my SAA meeting that day (other than Todd), admitted we had no idea what a healthy sexual relationship even looked like.

As for my wife and me, we are still together after 44 years. We haven't quit on our marriage. Our commitment to our family and Heavenly Father has endured, despite my past recklessness and sin. I now try to do God's Will one day at a time. But I am very sad to admit one thing. My wife and I have probably never experienced exactly what God intended for a husband and wife. I have often thought that my first five years of marriage were blissful, extremely happy, couldn't have been more perfect in any shape or form, except for our sexual relationship. I very much enjoyed my wife sexually during that time, but I was always wanting more. I have often thought though, that had my sexual expectations been met by my wife in those early years of marriage, I likely would have listened to my sex addiction's voice anyway and eventually gone down my destructive road nonetheless. Why? Because I was out-of-control, and didn't even know it.

In early 2008, I proved once again that if left untreated, sex addiction is progressive and will get worse. I was on my way home from an out-of-town funeral. I originally had planned to drive the entire 11 hours back home, but the funeral and after-meal ended up taking much longer than I had anticipated. I decided to drive a while and then stop in my old hometown. That would also give me a chance to visit an old high school friend (I will call her Betty) if she were home. I called ahead and Betty said she was available for me to drop by once I got into town.

I don't remember how I knew, but Betty had recently gone through a divorce. She still had two of her three children living with her. Upon my arrival, Betty acted excited to see me. After some brief visiting with the whole family at the house, Betty and I went out to supper. During our dinner conversation, I told Betty I had planned to find a nearby motel and spend the night because it was getting late. She would not hear of it and insisted I stay at her house. Betty said her son was already planning to spend the night at a friend's house, so I could sleep on his bed. After dinner, we headed back to the house. Her son had already been picked up by his friend. The daughter told us she was going to spend the rest of the evening in her room and go to sleep early because she had to be somewhere first thing in the morning.

As Betty and I sat on the living room couch hashing out old times, I felt very aroused. You see, Betty was not only an old high school friend, she was also an ex-girlfriend. My mind started fantasizing. Looking back, I don't think I would have allowed my mind to go wild had it not been for the fairly

recent German girl encounter. I remember feeling that stupid November 2007 reward erased all my good efforts for the previous 12 years. But I also quickly reminded myself that my six month plan was almost over. I would have my test results back soon and they would say I had nothing to worry about. I could then get back on track with my wife. That was the plan, so stick to it!

It was time to go to sleep. Betty walked me to her son's room and after getting me squared away, she said goodnight. As I laid there, my mind would not stop racing. I fantasized that Betty would walk back in the room soon and we would have sex. But then I realized something that immediately deescalated me. If I had contracted something from that German girl, then I would be passing that on to Betty too. Soon I fell asleep.

I don't know exactly how long I had been asleep, probably an hour or two. When I woke up, everything was quiet as a mouse. As I indicated before, I believe the German girl encounter shattered all my previously built up defenses. I was feeling 12 years of effort down the drain at that very moment, which I am sure was quite convenient for my sex addiction. So I compulsively acted.

I went to Betty's bedroom. Her television was still on, but she was asleep in her bed. I gently woke her and said I wanted to be close with her but emphasized we could not go all the way. Betty agreed. We spent approximately an hour doing everything but intercourse. I returned to her son's room, slept a bit, then left in the morning.

Over the next couple of months, Betty and I had an affair by phone and email. In due course, I received my test results and everything was clear. I decided to plan a rendezvous with Betty. I had a business trip coming up which included a layover in a city close to where Betty lived. She picked me up at the airport, we went to a nearby motel, and this time we did go all the way. Before our encounter was even over though, I was already feeling much regret and shame. It must have been apparent on my face and in my actions, because Betty asked me a question in a rhetorical manner. We are not going to do this again are we? Without hesitation, I said no we weren't. I knew it had to stop. Over the next month, we had a few final phone calls and then it was over. I never spoke to Betty again.

Dear Christian brother/sister, sex addiction is inevitably progressive if you do not commit yourself to a recovery program and to God's daily power. It is baffling how easily I could return to my old ways. Sex addiction is evil, that is all there is to it. Satan will try to use your addiction to destroy you.

A few months after I ended the affair with Betty, my wife confronted me about it. Betty's adult daughter had sent my wife information about the discovered affair. It was a very painful time for my wife and family. There were consequences and unpredictable repercussions to my family members that I won't detail here. I can't. It was all so very awful and painful. I will never be able to make up for what my dreadful behavior caused.

CHAPTER 5

WHY AM I A SEX ADDICT? AND WHY ARE YOU THE WAY YOU ARE?

I have often asked myself: why am I the way I am? While I don't know for sure, I do have some thoughts on the subject that I would like to share with you. I write this chapter knowing full well that your origins are not mine. Your story is unique to you, because it happened to you. I have heard many men and women tell of their origins. Some of their stories have common threads to mine and others are quite different. When SAA members listen to each other's origins, it helps us get in touch with our own stories. If reading my origins can help you in any possible way, I pray that it does. I also have some recommendations about treatment to share with you.

As a young child, I was very curious about my body. I don't believe it was because of anything I saw (no nude pictures yet or observed sexual acts), and nothing sexual had been done to me. I just had a growing interest in exploring my body, and other's as well. I was always the initiator, whether it was with my neighborhood friends or others. While I did experiment (touching and kissing) with boys and girls early on, I quickly learned that girls were my thing.

I first kissed a girl on the mouth at age five, when visiting a Christian Children's Home. Her slightly older brother bit me severely on the arm when he saw me do it. That was probably a foreshadowing of things to come in my life. At age six, I kissed my neighborhood friend in her backyard pool. She became my best friend throughout elementary school. By age eight, I had progressed to minor sexual acting out with other children.

I have wondered over the years if there was just something inside me, perhaps something genetic, beyond the normal inquisitiveness of other little boys and girls. But that notion does not totally reconcile for me because I believe that I am made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). For me, being made in God's likeness means that my Heavenly Father would not put a sexual addiction inside me. I do believe God created mankind with a healthy sexual desire, one that is designed with God's Will in mind. Unfortunately though, people have been distorting God's design for a long time now. As a young child though, I don't believe I was even aware of healthy or unhealthy sexual desires, I just felt the urge to explore.

But what about predispositions? The dictionary defines predisposition as a liability or tendency to suffer from a particular condition, or act in a particular way. I do believe some people have predispositions, and those can result from genetic factors or environmental conditions or a combination of the two. Is the belief in predispositions contrary to the doctrine of "*being made in God's image*?" I don't think so, but I will leave that for you to consider further and discern for yourself.

Do I have any predispositions? Do you? I am certain if I had continued drinking alcoholic beverages after graduating high school, I would be an alcoholic right now. In my youth, when I would start drinking it was difficult to stop, and I drank a lot. Maybe that was because my adoptive dad had me regularly tasting his beers in my elementary years. Maybe it was because I grew up watching an alcoholic dad every day till I was 17 years old. Maybe it was because I observed my brother, uncles, and my dad's closest friend abuse alcohol on a regular basis. Maybe the biological dad/mom I never knew was an alcoholic. Yes, I believe I am predisposed to being a disgusting drunk just like my adoptive dad, so that is why I don't drink alcohol anymore.

So was I predisposed to being a sex addict? I tend to think so because how could I not be? When one grows up daily around a person addicted to something (like alcohol), it's hard to imagine those addictive routines and tendencies are not absorbed somehow. Also, there is the issue of my biological parents. Did one or both of them struggle with sexually addictive behavior? I don't know if genetics plays a role of any kind in sex addiction, but since I never knew my biological parents, it is a moot point for me.

In my middle school years, I would routinely walk to my neighborhood store and look through the adult sex magazines that just sat on a shelf for anyone to pick up. I could browse through them all I wanted until a store worker chased me away. Did someone introduce me to porn? No, I was just intensely drawn to looking at those images as often as I could get away with it. I began stealing those types of porn magazines wherever I could find them. Unfortunately, that activity started me down a road of other juvenile shoplifting, theft, and burglary, which is altogether another story.

So did a predisposition actually cause me to be a sex addict? I don't think so. But I do believe a predisposition influenced me to choose sex to fill my holes. What's a hole? I think a hole in our lives is an intense pain and/or emptiness that has not been addressed. There is a great song titled "Holes" by a singer with the stage name of "Passenger." His real name is Michael David Rosenberg, and he is an English indie folk singer/songwriter. You should check his video out on YouTube, it is really good and quite therapeutic. The following is part of the lyrics in the "Holes" song: "*… we've got holes in our hearts … we've got holes in our lives … where we've got holes, we've got holes, but we carry on.*"

I previously mentioned that I was adopted, but I did not indicate it was when I was just a baby. I don't recall exactly when my adoptive parents told me they couldn't conceive so they decided to adopt, but it was definitely during my elementary years. When my friends would ask me about being adopted, I would tell them it was because my biological parents were poor and had too many kids to care for, and that they chose me to give away so that I could have a better life. Oh what wonderful biological parents I had for making such a sacrifice for me! Of course, I did not know if any of that was true. My adoptive parents knew nothing of my biological parents to pass on to me. So my fairytale sounded good to me, while all along my actual deep-seated feelings were quite different.

Why did they not want me? Why did they get rid of me? Those questions still echo in my head sometimes, even as an old man. To this day I still cry about it sometimes. It is not me though, the old man crying, I know how the world works. It is that inner child that got stuck somewhere along the way, and he just wants out to resolve his negative feelings. As an adult, I have reasoned that while it is possible my biological parents gave me away to give me a better life, it was more likely because I was unwanted. Unwanted because my mother was too young when she accidentally got pregnant. Unwanted because my parents were not married. Unwanted because I was the product of an affair. Unwanted because I was the result of a rape. Unwanted, but I will never really know why. But as a young child, I just knew I felt "very bad" about being unwanted, regardless of the reason. And as a child, I could not fathom what those unanswered, negative feelings were doing to me. In 2010, my mental health therapists would ask me: "If you had the chance, what would you tell that young boy back in the 1960s?" I never had an answer, because unwanted little boys just can't understand it. They just feel about it. They feel a hole.

I believe love can fill holes, but unfortunately so can a number of destructive things. My adoptive mom loved me dearly. I always knew that, up till the very day she died. I don't know why my mom's love didn't fill my hole. Perhaps because she was busy trying to navigate daily life with an alcoholic husband. Or maybe it was because she was often sidetracked by my older brother who was a very delinquent and dysfunctional person that struggled with drugs, alcohol, and violence. My mom was a devout Christian, who tried her best to pass her faith on to me. I do think she was successful in planting a foundation deep inside me, a groundwork for me to eventually hear God's Will for my life.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for my mom. And thanks for giving me a mom that had faith in you, otherwise I may never have known you. Please take care of her in Heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

I have experienced hardships in my life. I have counseled families, couples, individuals, and children who have been devastated by various painful events. When I was a probation officer, I supervised many wayward teens and adults who had stories of suffering before they turned to criminal behavior. I have heard tragedies told by a diverse multitude of sex addicts. From all those encounters, I have learned an important lesson. PAIN REQUIRES PAIN TO BE ADDRESSED, SOONER OR LATER. Unfortunately, I waited 50 years before I addressed my pain. But it took therapy from several different counselors before I even realized I had two longstanding and buried pains that were never addressed.

Of course the first pain is the hole I have already discussed. I call it the hole of UNWANTEDNESS. The second buried pain was harder for me to uncover and address. It was my adoptive dad.

As a child and teen, I would make all sorts of excuses for my adoptive dad's bad behavior. From first grade through my high school junior year, I participated in a lot of group activities. As previously mentioned, I was on my school's basketball, football, and track teams. I played in the band for both middle school and high school. There were many other group activities I was involved in too, with all of them resulting in various concerts, games, plays, and contests. I only recall my dad coming to one of my events during all those years, and he didn't even stay for the whole basketball game.

When I was often asked why my dad was not in attendance, I would tell people it was because he was a very busy person or because he had a loud cough from his excessive smoking and he did not want to bother folks. Those were my main "go to" excuses, and I was effective at communicating them. So effective, that I think I actually convinced myself of it. Now, as an adult with three wonderful grown children and multiple grandchildren, I see that was delusional thinking. My wife and I have been to literally hundreds of my children's and grandchildren's practices, games, concerts, performances, and shows. So what? So my dad did not want to watch me in those settings, what is the big deal? The big deal is that I was once again … unwanted.

I also made excuses to my friends when my dad would go on a tirade, yelling at me and them for something we did or didn't do right at my house. My closest friend (I will call him Teddy) knew otherwise though. You see, Teddy's dad was an alcoholic too. We both knew that when are dads were drinking we better stay clear of them. But that is easier said than done. Almost every day I would dribble my basketball to the nearby youth center, to either meet up with Teddy, or just play pickup games with whoever showed up. I often just played by myself, because being there was much better than being at home.

My dad drank a lot of alcohol every day. I saw it, I lived it. Sometimes he would just withdraw and totally ignore me and my older brother. Other times he would yell so loudly at us that I was in utter fear. The yelling was even worse than the belt whippings he would give us across our rears, legs, and backs. As a child, I assumed I deserved it all. I had no frame of reference as to how parents should discipline their children.

Looking back now, as a child I believed my dad did not want me. He never played a board game with me. We never had a heart-to-heart talk. He never threw a baseball or football to me. We never went to the movies together. He never helped me with my homework. We never talked sports or anything else for that matter. But for some reason that is unexplainable to me, while on camping trips my dad would sometimes let me play poker with him and my uncle. Unfortunately, he always ended up drinking and falling into the campfire or getting crosswise with my uncle. I don't recall my dad ever telling me he loved me or liked me or was proud of me. I only remember scoldings and his belt.

My dad had a best friend for a while (I will call him Keith). As far as I knew, Keith was my dad's only friend outside of the owner of the Wagon Wheel Saloon where my dad spent many hours of many days. Keith's house is the only house my parent's and I would visit from time to time, but that eventually ended. Keith also stopped coming over to our house when I was a teenager. My mom told me (many years later) it was because Keith was forced to stop drinking as the result of an ultimatum by his wife, and that ultimatum included no interaction with my dad.

My dad died from cancer when I was 17 years old. I did not even see or talk to my dad the last week of his life. He was in the hospital and I never went to see him that week. Because of his many previous hospital stays, I assumed he would be back home at some point. My mother only spoke to me one

time about his death, and it was a gruesome description. To this day, I don't recall anything at all about my dad's funeral. Nothing. I have no recollection, no pictures in my head about him lying in a casket or being buried in a grave. I have been told I was there.

I don't remember feeling angry at my dad when he was alive. That seems very strange to me now. I was definitely in fear of my dad, but not mad at him at the time. For some reason, on the surface emotionally I had bought into all those excuses I had made for him time and time again. But now, I see things as that really were, not as a child wants them to be. My dad was a bad dad. It took a lot for me to admit that, to say that out loud the first time in therapy. Does it matter *why* he was a bad dad? Not to a child in pain.

Starting in 2010, I did much exploration of my buried pain. I went from one therapist to another. I just couldn't seem to find the right one for me. Admittedly, I did learn some things from each counselor, regardless of their varied styles and approaches. I learned because I desperately wanted to know why I was the way I was. Attending SAA meetings gave me valuable tools on how to immediately manage and reduce my compulsive sexual behavior and thinking, but I felt a dire need to talk with somebody one-on-one, to get to the bottom of me specifically.

Do you have someone in your life that you can talk to about your deepest dark secrets? If yes, please lean on them. Caring and trusted friends can be extremely helpful.

In one of my past prayer group meetings, I was talking about my bad dad and one of my friends reminded me of something. My friend asked me if my dad had provided me with food to eat and shelter over my head each day. I reluctantly had to answer yes. I was immediately reminded that as an adult, I can choose to feel about my dad as I want to now. My inner child had buried pain but I can choose not to hold on to that anymore. As an adult I can choose something else. I now choose to extend grace to my dad, because my Heavenly Father and my family and friends have extended much unmerited grace to me. My deep-seated feelings may not have caught up with my head just yet, but I tell myself that my dad probably did the best he could at the time. He did provide my family with food and shelter. Also, he had been in World War II and as a medic he probably saw lots of ghastly things. Many soldiers had returned home as alcoholics after the horrifying events they experienced.

Processing our inner thoughts and feelings is extremely important. Unfortunately, my experience is that few people have someone in their lives they can do that with. So why not a professional therapist or counselor? Please consider that for yourself. You may also want to check out the Christian counselors first, because they call upon our Heavenly Father as their ultimate guide. Above all earthly counselors though, please remember that God and Jesus are the ultimate providers for what relieves pain and suffering. The following scriptures comfort me and provide me with hope.

PSALM 34:18

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

PSALM 147:3

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."

MATTHEW 11:28-30

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

JOHN 14:27
"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4
"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."

1 PETER 5:7
"Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

REVELATION 21:4
"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

As I previously mentioned, attending SAA meetings gives me valuable tools and reminders on how to manage my sex addiction. Just a few weeks ago, I heard a sex addict (I will call him Bob) read his written First Step story during an SAA meeting. It was so powerful. The First Step is designed to help newcomers launch into their recovery. The newcomer attends several SAA meetings first, then finds a seasoned recovering sex addict as a sponsor, and they determine together the best way to proceed with accomplishing the First Step. Bob's story pierced me. As a child he was so much like me. I looked around the room and saw 16 other guys with very serious faces, some tearing up, many nodding their heads. We all could identify.

Dear Christian brother/sister, I recommend you go on the internet and find all the times and locations of regularly scheduled SAA meetings in your area. Try different ones out at first, they are all confidential and you will be welcomed every time. You won't be judged by anyone there, and you will not have to talk at all if you don't want to. Find the one that meets your needs and feels right.

As you attend SAA meetings each week, I also encourage you to search out a therapist for one-on-one sessions on a regular basis. As was my experience, you may have to try several different ones but don't quit trying to locate the best one for you. Ask God to help you discover an effective recovery approach that will work for you. Our Heavenly Father knows what you need, just ask Him (Psalm 139:13-16, Luke 12:7, John 11:22, Romans 8:28, Romans 15:13). Praise God!

CHAPTER 6

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY – BUT I'D RATHER CRAWL UNDER A ROCK

I don't know if it is the ex-probation officer in me or what, but I feel obligated to write this chapter, especially after that origins chapter. Regardless of why I am the way I am, I am personally responsible for my actions as an adult. I believe that is true for all adults, whatever their story may be.

As a probation officer for over seven years, I heard every excuse in the book as to why my probationers committed their crimes. I must admit though, a few of their stories were actually heartbreaking. The hand they were dealt was far worse than anything I could imagine or experienced. But the bottom line is, we are all accountable.

I believe God's Word says it better than I can:

- Romans 14:12: "*Each of us will give an account of ourselves to God.*"
- 2 Corinthians 5:10: "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*"
- Colossians 3:5: "*Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry."*
- Hebrews 13:17: "*Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.*"

If you are like me, you probably fear coming clean about your compulsive sexual thinking and behavior. I get that. But I must tell you, sooner or later you have to confide in your family and closest friends. Sure, it won't be easy, but it is necessary for your recovery. Also, you may need to make amends to those you have hurt. SAA's eighth step tells us to make a list of all the persons we have harmed and become willing to make amends to them all. I know I have harmed people, and I am very sorry for that. The seriousness of the wounds I have caused becomes even more apparent to me as time goes by.

Before you take any action to come clean though, I can't recommend any specific approach or timing for you because I don't know your exact situation. Part of me thinks you should start your recovery as soon as possible, maybe even today. But I also don't want you to come clean until you are ready. Coming clean will trigger different outward results for different people. The stories I have heard from sex addicts vary greatly. Some experience the joy of learning the family and friends around them have the capability to forgive and love them despite their past behavior. That is what God graciously gave me, and I owe my family and friends much gratitude. Others experience immediate despair because the life they depended on crumbles around them. In some cases, despair can then swell to the impulse to want to harm oneself. I don't want you or anyone to ever feel so distraught that self-destruction is ever contemplated.

As I indicated in Chapter 1, I did not come clean on my own, I was caught. My wife confronted me in 2009 after learning of my last affair. I suggest you carefully weigh two possibilities for yourself and your situation:

- What would happen if I come clean to my family and friends?
- What would happen if I am caught acting out my compulsive sexual behaviors?

Perhaps you could discuss these two possibilities with someone that has the ability to keep your secret, and who knows you well enough to provide some Godly wisdom.

Please pray right now to our Heavenly Father for guidance on this issue.

CHAPTER *7*

LESSONS LEARNED

I must begin this chapter admitting my sex addiction caused much more pain, suffering, and consequences than what I have described in the first six chapters of this book. I ultimately decided to leave those other stories of distress and anguish out of the book. I don't think my heart can bear it,

it feels overwhelming. Besides, I think it best to now focus on the lessons learned by a Christian sex addict.

Please indulge me as I reiterate the lessons already identified in the first six chapters, in the order they were presented or discussed. I want this book to not only be a resource for you now, but also in the future. As time goes by, you may need to refresh yourself on these lessons. If it were me, I would not want to have to re-read the entire book. I pray this summary is helpful, and then we can proceed to discuss some additional lessons learned.

- We need to want to quit self-destructive thinking and disastrous behaviors.
- We must rely on God.
- We must not quit our healthy practices that our Heavenly Father has provided.
- Writing down some of our sex addict experiences, thoughts, emotions, and motivations can be very therapeutic and can help our recovery.
- We are not alone, there are other people out there much like us.
- We may have a story to share someday that might help others avoid our terrible mistakes.
- We learn from attending Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA) meetings.
- We feel holes in our lives, holes in our very being.
- Don't give into fear, shame, and guilt.
- Don't quit on any reemerging feelings (prompts from God) to tell your story to others it might help.
- We need to quit certain unhealthy and risky behaviors.
- There are some activities we should not quit, practices that our Heavenly Father will use to help us stop the destructive behaviors and faulty thinking.
- Living with our Heavenly Father for all eternity is going to be so sweet, and peaceful.
- God's peace, which surpasses all understanding, is even available to us now (Philippians 4:7).
- We often lead a double-life until we are caught or until we seek recovery on our own.
- Recovery is a big deal for us, and recovery has to start somewhere and sometime.
- Our eyes and mind are quite distorted, twisted, and tainted.
- We know how exhausting a double-life can be, to be a Christian and do all the things that Christians do or try to do, and yet also participate in some very wrong and vile sinful behaviors.
- We are in need of recovery and we need to take ownership of that fact.
- Our Heavenly Father is not finished with us yet.
- Don't quit on our healthy passions or wholesome pursuits, they may be serving as protections, or at least some bit of interference.
- We get trapped into believing that satisfying our urges is invariably the goal, not developing an actual relationship with the person.
- We lie to ourselves, that is what sex addicts do.
- Our "urges" will grow and are actually a "trigger" for compulsive sexual thinking and behavior.

- If we don't acknowledge to ourselves that we are triggered, then rather countering our urge to act out sexually, we will then engage in what is often termed (in SAA meetings) "a slip."
- We can't keep waiting until we are perfectly (always) sober. It is about progress, not perfection.
- Our addiction is a voice in our head that talks to us, and tries to convince us to do things that we know we should not do.
- We are broken people, but we also know the great Rescuer and Healer.
- Satan will never give up on trying to destroy us through whatever means possible. Satan wants us to quit seeking God's power to overcome our addiction.
- Our Heavenly Father will help us open our minds to His leading, to His Will, to where He wants to take us. God has a wonderful plan for each one of His children, better than anything we can imagine. God is in control of our lives, not Satan or any addiction, if we will just submit to Him, our awesome and grace-filled Heavenly Father.
- Christians can be sex addicts.
- Participating in SAA meetings is an amazing process, and it really works. The reason the SAA program works (sex addicts helping sex addicts) is because we all are not crazy at the same time.
- We admit we are powerless over addictive sexual behavior – that our lives had become unmanageable.
- We need God in order to stop our addictive sexual thinking and behavior.
- If we truly believe we are powerless over our addiction, how can we start any day without an admission to our Heavenly Father that we cannot make it that day without His help, without His power.
- We have felt out-of-control on many days, but have also thought we were in-control on some days as well. That is a lie Satan and our addiction had sold us on.
- Any day that we don't access God's power is a day that we are out-of-control, just waiting for a disaster to happen.
- Our thinking can get distorted and delusional. One day's events can trigger a horrible chain of events.
- Mental sexual fantasizing is very dangerous, it keeps us locked in our addiction.
- We can't just ask God for help every now and then. We can't just seek Him out on our terms when we feel like it or feel weak. The only way for us to succeed is that we have to access daily (sometimes multiple times a day) what only our Heavenly Father can give us.
- *"Dear Heavenly Father, I will fail today without your help and power. But with your help and power today I can fight off Satan and my addiction. So Father, please help me today and give me your power today, in Jesus's name, Amen."*
- Sex addiction is progressive and will get worse if left untreated.
- If we are not in some sort of recovery program with God as our daily power source, then we are OUT-OF-CONTROL!!! We then are a slave, a slave to our addiction and a slave to sin and Satan (Romans 6).
- Don't quit on marriage (if applicable in your case). Have a commitment to family and our Heavenly Father that endures. Try to do God's Will one day at a time.
- Sex addiction is inevitably progressive if you do not commit yourself to a recovery program and to God's daily power. It is baffling how easily we can return to our old ways. Sex addiction is evil, that is all there is to it. Satan will try to use our addiction to destroy us.

- There can be consequences and unpredictable repercussions to our family members that can be very awful and painful.
- When SAA members listen to each other's origins, it helps us get in touch with our own stories.
- We are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Being made in God's likeness means that our Heavenly Father would not put a sexual addiction inside us.
- The dictionary defines predisposition as a liability or tendency to suffer from a particular condition, or act in a particular way. Some people have predispositions, and those can result from genetic factors or environmental conditions or a combination of the two.
- Stealing porn can lead to increased severities of criminal activity.
- A predisposition does not cause one to be a sex addict, but can influence us to choose sex to fill our holes. A hole in our lives is an intense pain and/or emptiness that has not been addressed.
- Love can fill holes, but unfortunately so can a number of destructive things.
- PAIN REQUIRES PAIN TO BE ADDRESSED, SOONER OR LATER.
- We can learn some things from various counselors, regardless of their varied styles and approaches.
- Attending SAA meetings provides valuable tools on how to immediately manage and reduce our compulsive sexual behavior and thinking, but talking with someone one-on-one, can get to the bottom of each of us specifically.
- God and Jesus are the ultimate providers for what relieves pain and suffering.
- Search the internet and find all the times and locations of regularly scheduled SAA meetings in your area. Try different ones out at first, they are all confidential and we will be welcomed every time. We won't be judged by anyone there, and we will not have to talk at all if we don't want to. Find the one that meets our needs and feels right. As we attend SAA meetings each week, also search out a therapist for one-on-one sessions on a regular basis. We may have to try several different ones but don't quit trying to locate the best one for our situation. Ask God to help us discover an effective recovery approach that will work for us.
- Our Heavenly Father knows what we need, just ask Him and trust Him (Psalm 139:13-16, Luke 12:7, John 11:22, Romans 8:28, Romans 15:13).
- Regardless of why we are the way we are, we are personally responsible for our actions as an adult.
- We are all accountable (Romans 14:12, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Colossians 3:5, Hebrews 13:17).
- Sooner or later we have to confide in our family and closest friends. Sure, it won't be easy, but it is necessary for our recovery. But don't come clean until you are ready. Coming clean will trigger different outward results for different people. Carefully weigh two possibilities for your situation: What would happen if I come clean to my family and friends? What would happen if I am caught acting out my compulsive sexual behaviors? Discuss these two possibilities with someone that has the ability to keep your secret, and who knows you well enough to provide some Godly wisdom. Please pray right now to our Heavenly Father for guidance.

Please also consider the following additional lessons I have learned:

- Lay down this rule for yourself: Don't take a phone into any isolated bathroom. That may not always be practical, but do the best you can. A phone is a mini-porn machine and you don't need that temptation.

- Habitual masturbation puts you into an unnecessary fight with the temptation of porn viewing and opens the door for you to remember old affairs and pictures of porn that have been burned into your brain.
- Before you masturbate, immediately pray to God first, every time. Ask for His power to not sin and to not recall anything that is related to your previous sex addiction acting out.
- Masturbation and getting "triggered" will cause dopamine to be released into your brain, which will create a "high" for you. We are sex addicts and also drug addicts. Read Chapter 8 for more details on this issue.
- We can't always stop the twisted compulsive sexual thoughts from trying to invade our mind, but we can learn to reject and ignore them with God's daily power. Read Chapter 9 for more details on this issue.

CHAPTER 8

SEX ADDICTS ARE ALSO DRUG ADDICTS

I believe sex addicts are also drug addicts. That assertion is supported by my own experience, as well as from shared stories from other recovering sex addicts. We are addicted to dopamine.

I found the following information on the world renowned Cleveland Clinic's website. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter made in the brain. As a neurotransmitter, dopamine is involved in:

- movement;
- memory;
- pleasurable reward and motivation;
- behavior and cognition;
- attention;
- sleep and arousal;
- mood;
- learning; and
- lactation.

Dopamine is known as the "feel-good" hormone. It gives us a sense of pleasure. It also gives us the motivation to do something when we're feeling pleasure. As humans, our brains are hard-wired to seek out behaviors that release dopamine. When we're doing something pleasurable, our brain releases a large amount of dopamine. We feel good and we seek more of that feeling. I believe sex addicts actually develop a close relationship with that feeling. It is a bond that is very difficult to break for addicts.

Dopamine intensely reinforces our sexually compulsive behaviors. In my past, I had learned how to obtain a dopamine release in many ways, even through just mental sexual fantasy. When depressed, anxious, angry, or in fear of something, we learn the dopamine can mask undesirable feelings. We learn that we can get both excitement and escape at the same time. Unfortunately, we also learn that it is a short-term fix, a temporary rush. So we increasingly look forward to the next fix. The cycle is so destructive.

Breaking that cycle is quite difficult, but not impossible. Praise God! With practice and perseverance, I believe you can break that cycle. As indicated in the previous chapter, I recommend that before you masturbate, immediately pray to God first, every time. Ask for His power to not sin and to not recall anything that is related to your previous sex addiction acting out. You will fail at this exercise at first. Then you will achieve greater levels of success over time. As you re-train your body and mind, you will eventually be able to receive a dopamine rush WITHOUT engaging in any sexual fantasizing, porn viewing, or recollection of past sinful sexual behaviors/experiences.

But are you still a dopamine drug addict then? Unfortunately, I must say yes. But over time, you can also reduce the amount and frequency of dopamine rushes that you have previously convinced yourself that you need. With our Heavenly Father's power, we can get to a place where we do not rely on that dopamine. It can become an occasional pleasurable experience that does not revive or encourage our sex addiction. Praise God!

CHAPTER 9

JOHN NASH – A BEAUTIFUL MIND

In 2018, I watched a movie that has had a profound effect on my life. I have loved watching films my entire life, and my favorite motion pictures have always been those based on a true story, like the one titled *A Beautiful Mind*. While the movie *A Beautiful Mind* does have excellent acting and directing, it is the story that contains a revelation that serves me well to this day. That movie provides a framework that reminds me that my addiction is not just a spiritual, emotional, and chemical struggle, but a mental health issue as well. As mentioned in previous chapters, I have a master's degree in marriage and family therapy. I only bring that up again because I studied mental health and several different treatment approaches during that degree program. I believe those studies gave me a foundation for analyzing my own behaviors and thought processes, which I think led me to applying *A Beautiful Mind* to my sex addiction.

But before we go any further on this subject, I feel an obligation to pray again something I prayed in Chapter 1:

May our Heavenly Father bless your reading of this book. May God press upon your heart and mind what you need to hear. And anything in this book that is not true and useful for you should be discarded in accordance with God's Word and God's Will. In Jesus name I pray this, Amen.

A Beautiful Mind is a film about John Nash, a brilliant mathematician who struggled with schizophrenia, which included delusions and hallucinations. But Nash was not just any mathematician, he won a Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 1994 for his many contributions and years in the fields of game theory, geometry, and partial differential equations. While that was a very prestigious worldwide award, Nash's most remarkable achievement (in my opinion) was that he ultimately figured out how to successfully address his own delusions and hallucinations. While Nash's approach worked for him and is also effective for me, you may find it does not work for you. But I offer it for your consideration.

In 1961, at the age of 30, Nash was admitted to a state mental health hospital. For the next nine years, he had various visits to other psychiatric hospitals as well. Nash has reported that he took some prescribed medications during his treatments, but did not take any medications after 1970. Around 1970, Nash started applying a very basic and useful approach to his delusions and hallucinations.

After viewing *A Beautiful Mind*, I found myself obsessed with reading about Nash, and watching internet videos of his many interviews. MOVIE SPOILER ALERT – for those of you who have

watched *A Beautiful Mind* (or will in the future), I have to disclose that Nash has said that he never actually had visual hallucinations (seeing things that aren't there), only auditory hallucinations and delusions (hearing voices that aren't really there). But for purposes of the valued lesson I have learned from Nash, that discrepancy between movie and reality does not matter.

So what did I learn from John Nash that is so valuable?!? I will let Nash tell you in his own words, just as I heard them in his interviews:

- *"I became disillusioned with some of my delusions."*
- *"I began arguing with the concept of the voices, and ultimately I began rejecting them and then deciding not to listen."*

That's it!!! Nash decided to reject and ignore the voices that were not real. Did the voices just go away then? No, but Nash trained himself to stop paying attention to the unreal voices and what they were telling him to do.

Nash died in a car wreck in 2015. I don't know if he was "cured" or not by that time. And I certainly don't know if Nash's approach to his mental illness is something that other persons diagnosed with schizophrenia can successfully use. But what I do believe, is that Nash was on to something, something quite profound. While I don't know if Nash's mental health symptoms (hearing unreal voices) were ever totally eradicated, I think he discovered something valuable in his recovery that may be of help to sex addicts.

I believe sex addicts often feel the twisted compulsive sexual thoughts and voices that often pop into their head are inescapable and real. Even though I have been in recovery for 14 years, very ungodly sexual thoughts and notions still enter my brain at times. Why is that? Where does that even come from? Deviant sexual thoughts can be the furthest thing from my mind, then all of a sudden, there it is, in my brain, bouncing around trying to get me to do something that I know is unhealthy and destructive and evil. I am not talking about recollections of something bad I have already done or seen, I mean words in my mind trying to influence me to do a vile act.

I used to think those words were just a manifestation of my fleshly selfish desires. But now, I believe those words are not from me. They are not from the mind that God gifted me. I know that must sound confusing, because it is perplexing to me too. But as I indicated in Chapter 5, I believe I have been made in the image of God, and my Heavenly Father would not keep putting those wicked words and instructions in my mind. Those words are not from God. I don't know if those words are from Satan or from a mental illness or from a mind that I just broke, but what I do know is that those words are not real. And those unreal words are not to be acted upon. Those words serve no good purpose. I will admit they can sometimes trigger the release of dopamine in my head, but I can ignore that. I can do something that distracts me from the chemical reaction in my brain and just move on. Or I can use that chemical high to drive me to do something positive for my Heavenly Father. Praise God!

I believe sex addicts often feel they have a real need to act out their ungodly and twisted sexual thoughts. For some, that sense of need becomes overwhelming. By indulging those perceived "needs", we feel that our holes are somehow being filled up, even if just momentarily. But that is just a feeling, although I grant you, a very strong feeling.

But are those real needs?

I respectfully request that you consider something and ask yourself: Am I perceiving and feeling that my sexually compulsive thinking and behaviors are real needs? I bet we all can agree that we need to

love and be loved. I know I have a real need to love God and for my Heavenly Father to love me. But somewhere down the line, did I fall into a trap of believing that my sexually compulsive thinking and behaviors were some sort of real need?

Now please ask yourself again: Is it possible I am perceiving my sexually compulsive thinking and behavior as real needs, when in fact they are not? Just as John Nash learned to reject and ignore his unreal voices, can I learn to not listen to my addictive sexual thoughts and not do the things they tell me to do?

For me, I don't think my sexual addiction can ever be perceived as singularly a mental health issue. I will always think Satan is behind it too, but those two understandings don't have to be mutually incompatible. For years now, I have practiced not listening to the inner sex addiction voices. They are not real. And for many months now, I have noticed that I have even been saying out loud (usually in a whisper) *Heavenly Father, that is not real.* Why do I tell God that? Of course the Almighty God knows it is not real. I think I want my Heavenly Father to know that I realize that thought is not from Him, and not from the mind He gifted me, and that He is always with me.

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

The Serenity Prayer quoted above is spoken out loud by all attendees at the beginning and end of every SAA meeting. That prayer and practice holds extra special meaning for me when I think of John Nash. I can't always stop those unwanted compulsive thoughts from trying to invade my body, but I can learn to reject and ignore them with God's power.

You will likely find it hard saying goodbye to the habit of listening to those voices in your head, to those compulsive sexual thoughts. That is not surprising, because you have had a longstanding relationship with them for many years. But don't quit trying.

Thank you Heavenly Father for John Nash.

CHAPTER 10

GOD LOVES YOU AND ME

God gave Rebecca St. James a beautiful heart and story, from which she wrote an amazing song. When I listen to the lyrics, I feel like they are speaking for me and directly to me. Rebecca St. James is an Australian American singer/songwriter/actor/author who wrote the song titled *You Make Everything Beautiful.* While all the words of the song hold deep significance for me, the lyrics that grip me most are:

"*… in my weakness you can shine*"

"*… in your strength I can fly*"

"*… grant me freedom to walk a new path*"

"*… and let me feel your love*"

"*… knowing you redeem my pain and failure, purify my soul*"

"*… you make everything, everything new*"

God does make everything new. We can trust our Heavenly Father and Jesus to make us new. Revelation 21:5 tells us: ***And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."***

So why does God and Jesus make you and me new? Because ***Our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father loves us*** (Second Thessalonians 2:16). Because God wants you and me. Because our Heavenly Father pursues us wherever we are. Because God knows everything about us and still loves us – ***God knows how many hairs you have on your head*** (Luke 12:7).

I love the scripture from Psalm 51:10: ***Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*** I feel God working on me daily. Do you?

If yes, praise God! If no, please be comforted that: ***No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it*** (First Corinthians 10:13).

In Chapter 1, I told you that our Heavenly Father is not finished with you and me yet. I meant that. And while I feel God working on me daily, I also sense there is more that God wants from me and for me. I don't know what God specifically has in store for me, but that is okay because I have learned to truly trust Him. Can you put your wholehearted trust in our Heavenly Father? I hope so, because I have learned that is what it takes to live life, one day at a time. One last lesson … once you begin trusting God every day, don't quit.

Dear Heavenly Father,
I am extremely thankful that you are my Heavenly Father. Talking with you every day brings me peace, hope, perspective, gratitude, reminders, and your power. I know that I need you more than anything else. I enjoy talking with you and listening for you. I love how that feels. I love that you love me in spite of my past and present behavior, and that you always chase after me. I am amazed at your grace and am very thankful for it. Because of your grace and because you love me, I look forward to being with you in Heaven for all eternity. I thank you for my family and friends. Please keep my family and friends very safe, both physically and spiritually. I thank you for your power to help me fight Satan and fight my desire to indulge in sexually compulsive thinking and behavior. Please take all evil desires out of me completely. With your power, I look forward to the day when all my sexually compulsive thinking and behavior ends, forever and ever, Amen.